

Stay Safe and Healthy at the County Fair

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Root beer, corn dogs, animals and rides – for many of us the highlight of the summer is the county fair. We look forward to bringing home prizes, pictures and great memories, not an illness caused by germs or unsafe food. Take some simple steps this year to be sure your fair experience is a safe and healthy one.

To protect yourself against illness, be sure to **wash your hands** with soap and running water several times throughout the day, especially after visiting the restroom, after changing a diaper, or before eating. Common surfaces such as rides, railings and door handles will be touched by hundreds of hands – many of them unclean. Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth to keep from introducing any germs you may have on your hands into your body. If soap and water are not available, carry a small container of hand sanitizer with you and use it frequently.

While **petting zoos and animal displays** are enjoyable, they, too, carry risk of disease. Stay safe by washing your hands after you pet the animals. Don't share your food or drink with them, and don't kiss them. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that children under 5 years old not visit petting zoos, as they are more at risk than adults for contracting diseases from animals.

Finally, be sure the **food you eat is safe**. Food at the fair should be cooked thoroughly, in a clean environment and stored at the proper temperature. Check to make sure the booth is clean. Vendors who are handling ready-to-eat food, such as fresh fruit, sandwiches and hot dogs, should wear gloves. Hot foods should be kept hot and cold foods cold. Your local public health department works with fair vendors to ensure their food is safe, but you can be vigilant, too.

Follow these safety guidelines to ensure the only thing you take away from the fair this year is happy memories.

For more information, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department at (417) 864-1658.